

# Farmington Observer OPINION

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33411 GRAND RIVER, FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN 48335

THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2000

## Drama

### Students just want a stage

The fact that Harrison High School didn't have a winter drama or doesn't plan to have a spring musical or drama club may not shake the world.

But to some kids it's important. Just as important as football and a football field is to athletes.

Harrison sophomore Samantha Steckloff, who singlehandedly questioned administrators about the lack of theatrical productions, is to be lauded for her efforts to make the plight of drama students well known.

She and a number of other students are genuinely interested in drama. Continuing construction at the high school has prevented use of the stage, and therefore stopped theatrical productions, leaving these kids without an opportunity they want for themselves.

For Steckloff construction restraints as a reason isn't good enough when placed next to the fact that last year's North Farmington production was held at Farmington High School.

"Yes, North Farmington used Harrison last winter, and this is exactly my point. There is no leadership from the Harrison High School staff to champion a drama club or a play. How sad," Steckloff wrote to district officials.

From Steckloff's perspective, that sounds awfully true.

Students who love a particular art form, whether it's painting, sculpting, music or drama, don't need fancy quarters to discover and learn their crafts. And most are willing to endure hardships, such as traveling to another high school in the district, to enjoy their art.

As Steckloff says, some leadership from administrators was in order to ensure that somehow and somewhere a theatrical production could be a reality this year for Harrison drama students.

A number of options would have been available to provide interested Harrison students with a theatrical opportunity. Perhaps with better organization and leadership it would have been possible for students to use North or Farmington high school's stages. Or perhaps administrators should have invited interested Harrison students to participate in the other high schools' productions. Or how about an outdoor production this spring?

Students are not only innovative and creative, they are resilient. Where adults may find inconvenience and chaos, students find



**Vocal:** Samantha Steckloff is right on about the need to give students a chance to participate in a theatrical production at Harrison High School, despite construction.

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challenge and delight.

Harrison principal Rande Horn and other district officials say they sympathize with the students who are missing out on a theatrical experience this year.

To a student, that's an empty sentiment. Next year may as well be years from now.

"Yes, there is a group of kids who will miss it," Horn said. "But we hope that next year we really knock ourselves out and make up for what we missed out on this year."

We have no doubt that school officials were not trying to be mean-spirited. But here's a case in which students really want to do something. And all too often it seems that those kids who really want to embrace an interest are asked to be patient.

There's still some months left in the school year. School administrators and staff should work with these students interested in drama and help them realize their dreams - this year.

## Census: Your future depends on it

Come on, send it in. What are you waiting for?

Ed McMahon's admonition for Publisher's Clearing House could be the battle cry for the U. S. Census.

You've received them in the mail, now it's time to turn them in.

No, you won't be one of the lucky winners of a \$10,000,000 check, and no one will come knocking at your door with a camera crew. But by returning the Census you will help your community to receive its fair share of government funding, and you'll provide valuable data that will make it easier to plan for the future for every level of government and private business.

Unlike the Publisher's Clearing House come-on for selling magazine subscriptions, the Census isn't voluntary. The federal government is required by the Constitution to make an enumeration every 10 years in order to properly apportion congressional representation. As residents of this country we are required, by law, to participate in the Census.

The simple enumeration has widespread consequences. Over the last several decades the population has shifted to the West and South. The older industrial states of the East and Midwest have lost population and political clout. Within those states, there has been a movement out of the big cities and near suburbs to exurban areas and smaller cities. These changes have resulted in political shifts that have had major effect on government spending policies.

And though these shifts are being accurately reflected, there is some honest concern that many people in the big cities and older suburbs are not being counted. Some avoid filling out Census forms because they fear how the government will use the forms. Others aren't connected enough in the community and can't be located by Census takers.

It is important that the word get out that the Census is important to everyone's future,

**■ The government has enlisted churches, schools, businesses and the media to get out the word.**

that the information being gathered won't be used against individuals or groups and that every community organization should help in locating individuals who might not be discovered by the Census Bureau.

In addition to the importance of the Census apportioning the Congress and state legislatures, the government realized over the years that the Census was an opportunity to gather information that would help in planning future government programs. This information, gathered on the long form that goes to about one in six households, is also used by private business which also needs these statistics for planning.

Some have complained that the Census is an invasion of privacy. The Census Bureau has made every effort to assure everyone that all information gathered is confidential and used only to prepare statistical data. A recent report on the misuse of Census information during World War II might cause some to pause, but through the long history of the Census Bureau and certainly in recent history, the vow of confidentiality has been strictly honored. The information is used for statistical data, not to target individuals or groups.

But that information on military service, transportation habits, occupation, income, type of housing, plumbing, utility costs, etc. is invaluable in the aggregate in creating a portrait of the nation for fact-based development.

The government has enlisted churches, schools, businesses and the media to get out the word.

Now it's up to you. For the sake of your future, send it in!



## LETTERS

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, that's why we offer this space for your opinions. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity we ask that you provide a contact telephone number and if mailing or faxing a letter, please sign it. Letters can be mailed to Joanne Maliszewski, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335, faxed to Joanne at (734) 459-2700 or emailed to jmaliszewski@oe.homecom.net

### Divisive rhetoric

The letter in your March 2 paper from Cathleen M. Webb cannot go unanswered. She is shrill, emotional and very divisive in her statements regarding the school voucher issue. She offers no facts to support her arguments except to beat the now familiar whipping boy, the "extreme conservative (religious) right wing crusade."

When one is short on facts, it is easy to blame someone else to try to support your weak position. She raises too many issues to try to resolve here, but let's examine some of them.

First off, let it be clear that I have no quarrel with the Farmington school system, per se, but I have a real problem with the issues Ms. Webb raises. Every Farmington and Farmington Hills homeowner pays school taxes. Those who choose private or parochial schools carry a double burden and that is grossly unfair, yet most of them do not complain.

If all of these schools were to close today, the public school system wouldn't be able to handle the result. If Ms. Webb knew the history of this country, she would know that it is the religious community that initiated most of the educational systems we take for granted, giving them no credit at all. Is that fair?

If she were to look at our neighbor to the north, she would find that, at least in the province of Ontario, the taxpayers have a choice as to which system to support, parochial or public. In spite of that, neither school system, nor their provincial government, has collapsed yet, over all these years, so it can't be so bad.

In other phases of our lives we find that a little competition has been a stimulus for the betterment of society. Why does the public school system fear this? Why can't we offer our citizens a real choice? We seem to relish choice in other areas of our lives.

Another bogus issue is that of separation of church and state. This is the most misunderstood and deliberately slanted issue there is. No one in the school voucher camp is proposing a state religion and Ms. Webb knows that, or should. To argue otherwise is most disingenuous and just fans the flames.

A rebuttal can be made for just about every statement made in Ms. Webb's letter, but it will have to wait for some other time. I just hope that people see through her narrow self-interest. Clearly this kind of divisive rhetoric from our school board has no place in our community.

Henry Gryh  
Farmington Hills

### Watch out

President Clinton may be right that trigger locks would protect us from irresponsible killers. Many would have survived Waco if these locks had been on FBI guns. Locks on our bombers and missiles would have saved Kosovo from mass destruction.

When poll-watching politicians save us from something, look out! High speed is dangerous. Raising speed limits above 55 mph reduced accidents because more drivers traveled at the same speed. Gasoline was expensive in the '70s, but the regulations caused shortages and higher prices. Removing controls made it cheaper than bottled water. Air bags save tall people, but kill short ones. Surviving generations will likely be taller. If handguns are locked, family members cannot quickly defend themselves from intruders.

Heaven help us because politicians will not.  
Hank Borgman  
Farmington

### Raise voices

This refers to the recent effort by our cable provider, Time-Warner, to remove Aldo Vagnozzi from the appointed three-man tribunal to review and make recommendations regarding TWC's proposed cable franchise agreement.

Vagnozzi has a long record of serving the best interests of our community and is known to be a fair and equitable judge of our best interest. His experience as an active member of SWOCC, as mayor and long tenure council member of the Hills, and his knowledge of the intricacies makes him a formidable negotiator to ensure our best interests.

This recent move by Time-Warner to seek legal action to remove Vagnozzi from the tribunal is proof of Vagnozzi's effectiveness in representing our side of the negotiated franchise agreement. An SWOCC administrative board must meet to determine if the bias charges have merit or should Vagnozzi disqualify himself. Neither action is in the interest of our community and we must raise our voices to that effect. SWOCC's long phone menu is 248-473-7266.

Steve and Lori Hack  
Farmington Hills

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— Philip Power